

West Africa Workshop on skills development unifies eight countries

Skills development is a crucial condition for economic growth. This statement is recognized and confirmed by almost all employers' organisations. At the same time the issue is an ocean of challenges. That is why DECP developed a cross-cutting workshop. Unfolding the problem with the help of a problem tree reveals problem definitions, effects and causes. This analysis allows participants to the workshop to define concrete action plans. Because skills development is a very complex issue, solutions will never be easy to find. But choices can be made and a start has to be made. It takes three (or more) to tango. The government, the educational system and employer's organisations, preferably in dialogue with trade unions. But employers' organisations can take the lead in tackling the issue in order to create solutions for member's needs.

DECP organised a three days cross-cutting workshop on skills development in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, from 20 to 22 March. 23 staff- and board members from eight French speaking West African countries participated. Each employers' organisation was invited to present their current challenges and the role skills development is playing in their strategy. This exercise was much appreciated by the participants because it offered them the possibility to exchange experiences and ideas. Focus of the workshop was on the three key elements of the problem tree approach: problems (1) on skills development (as perceived by entrepreneurs), in-depth root causes (2) and opportunities to create solutions (3). The members of each team finalised the workshop by (re)defining concrete action plans which they presented to each other.

One of the overall conclusions was that quite a few problems in different countries are rather similar. This allowed the participants to inspire each other in defining actions plans which they will carry out the coming months. After all, the final question was: 'what are you going to do tomorrow to tackle the problem?' Although employer's organisations are in the lead, it still takes three to tango. The more successful the action plans turn out to be, the easier collaboration with other -important- parties will be. DECP will follow-up this activity by visiting several employers' organisations on a short term to discuss the country specific approach and progress and by sharing best practices with the participants.